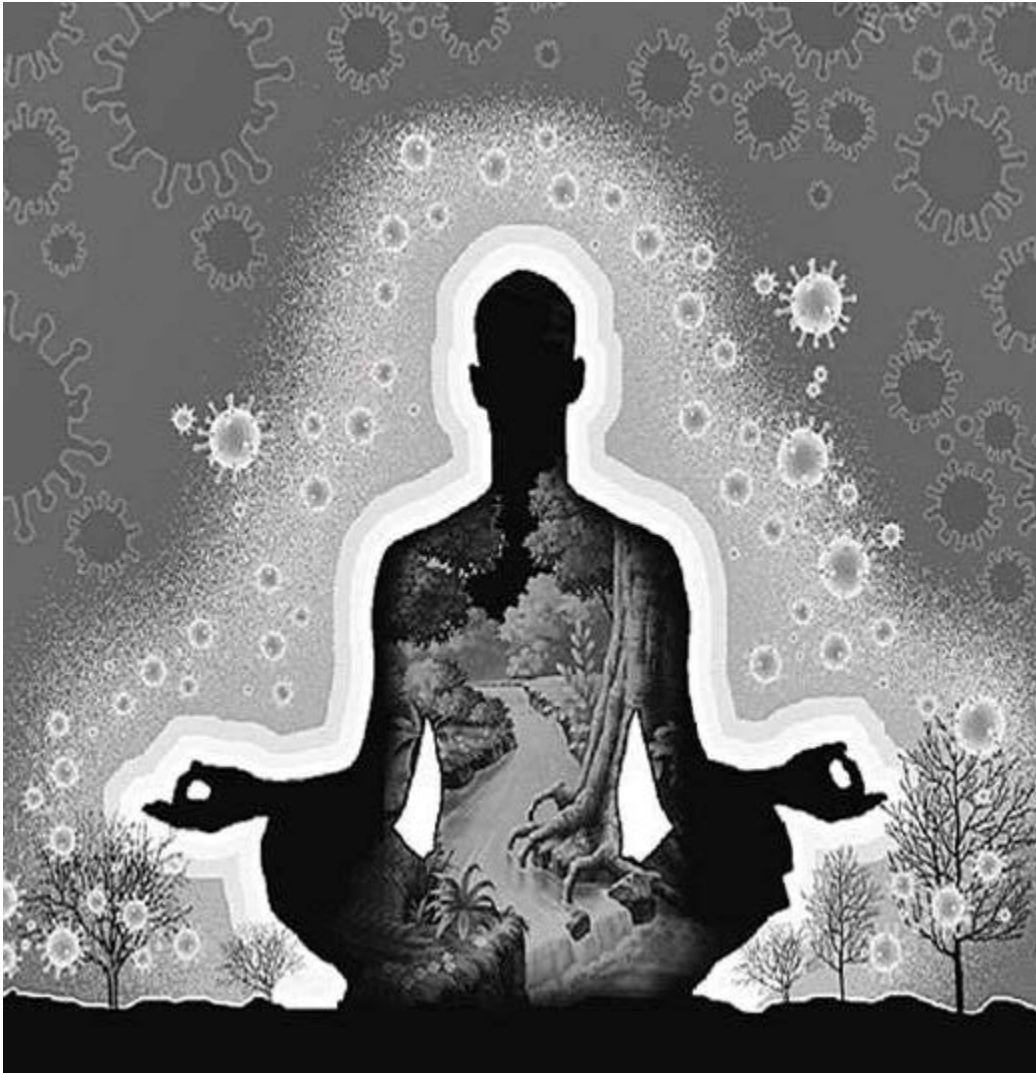


Ayurveda-Vedanta

The Vedanta of Life Science



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*Tattva Prakasha Volume One, Issue Nine -
November 9, 2001*

The bi-monthly newsletter of IndiaDivine.com
published by Bhaktivedanta Ashram, Mysore.

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Introduction

*krishna varnam tvishakrishnam
sangopangastra parshadam
yajnaih sankirtana prayair
yajanti hi sumedhasah*

This is a verse from the Srimad Bhagavata Purana (11.5.32):

"In the age of Kali, intelligent persons worship the incarnation of Godhead who constantly performs the sacrifice of congregational glorification of the Lord. Although His external complexion is not blackish, within, He is Krishna Himself. He is accompanied by His associates, servants, weapons and confidential companions."

According to the opinion of many Acharyas who are experts in the study of Vedic literature, this verse describes the incarnation of Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who descended to earth in the holy place known as Navadvipa on the bank of the Jahnavi (Ganges) river in the

present state of West Bengal, India, in the year of 1486 A.D.

Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, became famous as Nimai pandita (pandita means a great scholar of the Vedas; having been born under the medicinal neem tree, He was known as Nimai) from His early childhood, because of his erudite scholarship of the vast ocean of Vedic literature. He compared the ten essential subjects of the Srimad Bhagavata Purana with the ten medicinal roots of the Ayurveda (Dasha mulas). He explained that, just like the dasha mulas made into an "arishtam" cures the diseases caused by the imbalance of the three dhatus, viz., kapha, vayu and pitta (mucus, air and bile), in the same way the dasha mulas of Srimad Bhagavatam (the ten root subjects) will cure the diseases of material identification caused by the imbalance of the three gunas, viz, sattva, rajas and tamas (goodness, passion and ignorance). According to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Srimad Bhagavata Purana is a natural

commentary on the Vedanta-sutras of Srila Vyasadeva:

*artho 'yam brahma-sutranam
bharatartha-vinirnayah
gayatri-bhasya-rupo 'sau
vedartha-paribrmhitah
purananam sama-rupah
saksad-bhagavatoditah*

"The Srimad Bhagavatam is the natural commentary to the Vedanta-sutra. The full purport of the Mahabharata is also there. The commentary of the Brahma-gayatri is also there and fully expanded with all Vedic knowledge. Srimad Bhagavatam is the supreme Purana, and it was compiled directly by the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His incarnation as Vyasadeva."

All Vedantic expositions are commentaries by various Acharyas on the Vedanta sutras. So the ten essential subject matters of Srimad Bhagavata Purana are like "Vedantic observation and prescription" by the (Ayur)Vedic Acharya Vyasadeva based on his

own study of the (Ayur)Veda shastra, the Vedanta-sutras.

Thus there is no doubt that the Ayurveda shastras and the Vedantic shastras have a very similar, if not actually the same, purpose to them. Having established this samya and sambandha (resemblance and relationship) of Ayurveda and Vedanta, let us make an analytical study of the subject through the eyes of both Vedantic and Ayurvedic Acharyas:

Medicine and healing are the two most important physical sciences explored and developed in the Vedic times. The Nyaya, Vaiseshika and Sankya Darshanas are directly and intimately connected with these aspects of Vedic knowledge.

Hatha yoga, Tantra physiology, Siddha and many other yoga schools of study extensively deal in their anatomy sections with subjects from the diffusion of energy in the body through the nervous system (based on the chakra linked management of energy) up to the study of embryology, heredity and genetic codes.

Chapter - 1

Ayurveda as Part of the Vedas

The great Ayurvedic Acharyas have confirmed that Ayurveda is also part of the Vedas.

Susruta, one of the greatest Ayurveda Acharyas says in his Samhita (1.1.5) :

"Ayurveda is an upanga of the Atharva Veda, containing 100,000 verses in one thousand chapters. Brahma is the author of these verses."

While hands and legs are angas of our body, toes and fingers are upangas. The academic view may not be able to digest that such a large upanga would have been part of the Atharva Veda, because the entire available texts of the present Atharva Veda seem to be much smaller than Ayurveda alone as described in the above text!

But still Acharya Susruta's statement is an "apta vakya"; so it cannot be under-estimated or rejected as a mere exaggeration. There are reasons why the present numbers, shape and form of the Vedic texts do not tally with facts

and figures mentioned in the Puranas and other Vedic literatures. That is yet another area of research and we do not want to go off the track from our present discussion.

As Ayurveda is an upanga of the Vedas, it has the same purpose in a different denomination. The Upanishads which are considered as the end of the Vedic knowledge (veda-anta or Vedanta), aim at understanding the absolute truth, Brahman, beyond the functioning of external, material nama-rupa-jagat (the constantly changing energy of name and form). In a different denomination of the level of expression, Ayurveda also aims at the study and maintenance of the mechanism of the body with a purpose of giving full potential functioning duration so that the aim of life can be achieved. Thus there is Vedanta in the Ayurveda - and it is in no way of a lesser voltage than any other upanga of the Vedas.

According to Vedanta, life is eternal and was never produced or came into existence at a particular time in the history. The Upanishads

are very insistent on this point of Vedanta. The Katha Upanishad 1.2.18 says:

*na jayate mriyate va vipashcin
nayam kutashca na babhuva kashcit
ajo nityah shashvato 'yam purano
na hanyate hanyamane sharire*

"For the soul, there is neither birth nor death at any time. It does not come into being at any time, it is unborn, eternal and primeval. It doesn't die when the body is put to death."

The basic foundation of Ayurveda is also on the same platform. The life or Ayu is fully comprehended as eternal and beyond the bodily existence. Such knowledge (veda) makes the phrase "knowledge of life", viz., Ayurveda.

Vedas are considered as eternal sound vibration present in the akasha, shabda-brahman; the knowledge in the Vedas is eternal. Therefore the knowledge of Ayurveda, this knowledge of life, its force in the body and its distribution through the dhatus by the life airs is also eternal. There has always been the continuity of the science of life, viz., Ayurveda.

The different styles of systematic compilation of the knowledge and instructions for the practical application of that knowledge certainly have an origin in recorded history. But the spirit and soul of this knowledge is directly part (upanga) of the eternal, undying Vedic lore (Atharva Veda). It has never taken "birth" at a particular time.

Even though at present only the treatises of Charaka and Susruta, which were commented on by later Acharyas, are taken as Ayurveda, according to Susruta himself Ayurveda is the original teaching of Brahma which was later simplified into eight parts to suit the degraded intellectual quality of the people of this age of Kali.

There are eight departmental limbs (ashtanga) of knowledge in Ayurveda:

- 1) salya - surgery
- 2) salakya - treatment of head
- 3) kaya cikitsa - treatment of ordinary diseases of body

- 4) bhuta vidya - treatment of influence of goblins
- 5) kaumara bhrtya - treatment for children's diseases
- 6) aagada tantra - antidotes to poisons
- 7) rasayana - science of rejuvenation of body
- 8) vajikarana - revival of sexual strength

Having analyzed the authenticity of the Ayurveda as part of Vedas, now we will explore the contents of the texts of Ayurveda that confirms this conclusion.

Chapter – 2

Methods of Treatment in Ayurveda

The Atharva Veda deals with the treatment of diseases by seven kinds of prescriptions:

Svastyayana - propitiatory rites

Bali - offerings

Mangalahoma - oblations

Niyama - penances

Prayascitta - purificatory rites

Upavasa - fasting

Mantra - chanting of sound vibrations

- Charaka Samhita 1.30.20

Even the dietary regulations and the use of medicines fall within the category of bali, mangalahoma, upasana and niyama.

I have myself seen the father of my family doctor who was treating my father for respiratory malfunction, prescribe medicines with mantras to be chanted; and it worked like magic! Later on I have done a wide range of

research on this field, both theory and practice, and it would be worth it to write a separate samhita on this subject.

Chapter - 3

The Human Body as a Modification of the Five Elements

The human body is regarded by Charaka as a modification of the five elements and the seat of consciousness ("cetanahistana bhuta", Charaka Samhita 4.4.6).

This fully echoes the statements of the Bhagavad-gita:

*bhumir apo 'nalo vayu kham mano buddhir eva
ca
ahankara itiyam me bhinna prakrtir ashtadha
apareyam itas tv anyam prakritim viddhi me
param
jiva-bhutam maha-baho yayedam dharyate
jagat*

"Earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, intelligence and false ego - all together these eight constitute My separated material energies. Besides these, O mighty armed Arjuna, there is another, superior energy of Mine, which comprises the

living entities who exploit the resources of this material, inferior energy."

IV - Conception according to Ayurveda

The semen that passes into the ovary is constituted of equal parts of air, fire, water and earth. Later, ether becomes mixed with it in the ovary. Semen is the product of six kinds of fluids known as rasas.

*vayu agni bhumy abguna padavat
tad sadbhyo rasebhyah prabhavat ca tasya*
- Charaka Samhita, 4.2.4.

The fetus cannot be produced simply by the union of the semen of the father and the srontia or blood of the mother. Such a union can produce the fetus only when the atman with its subtle body becomes connected with it by prarabdha karma of the past.

Chapter - 4

Elements of Conception

The elements that contribute to the features of the new body are (from the mother's side) blood, (from the father's side) semen, and the karma of the individual soul.

The mental attitudes are determined by the state of mind of the individual in the previous life.

*tesham viseshad balavanti yani bhavanti mata
pitri karma jani*

*tani vyavasyet sadrishatva lingam sattvam
yathanukam api vyavasyet*

- Charaka Samhita 4.2.27

This same truth is confirmed in the Gita (8.6) as follows:

*yam yam vapi smaran bhavam tyajaty ante
kalevaram*

tam tam evaiti kaunteya sada tad-bhava-bhavita

"Whatever state of being one remembers when he quits his body, O son of Kunti, that state he will attain without fail."

Again, Charaka clearly explains that when one dies, the soul together with the subtle body, in a subtle state and mind, passes invisibly into a particular womb on account of karma, and then, when the conception takes place, develops one's fetus:

*bhutair caturbhih sahitah su sukshmair
manojavo deham upaiti dehat
karmat makatvan na tu tasya drishyam divyam
vina darshanam asti rupam*

- Charaka Samhita 4.2.3

Chapter – 5

The Cause of the Senses

The child does not owe sense organs to his parents; he alone is responsible for his sense organs ("atma jannindriyani"). The cause for the status of his sense organs is daiva, fruits of his prarabdha (fructified previous reactions).

Thus there is no hard and fast rule that a child of a man who has defective senses will also have defective senses. (Charaka Samhita 4.3.25) It is not just the bodies of the parents which make the body of the child. Ayurveda is very clear about this. The idea that bodies create bodies and consciousness is only a product of matter is not supported by the Ayurveda. Such idea is declared as demoniac in the Gita (16.8)

*asatyam apratishtham te jagad ahur
anishvaram
aparaspara-sambhutam kim anyat kama-
haitukam*

"The asuras (demons) say that this world is unreal, with no foundation, no God in control. They say it is produced of sex desire and has no cause other than lust."

Chapter – 6

Awareness is intrinsic to the Soul

The spirit soul, is always with awareness. It is never without the "sattva", or the awareness:

*na hy asattvah kadacit atma sattva viseshac
copalabhyate jnana viseshah*

- Charaka Samhita 4.3.26

In the material existence the spirit soul is aware through the mind stuff which is like a crutch that is used by a disabled person to walk. The healthy awareness is the consciousness which is the symptom of the spirit soul. This consciousness always exists and is not destroyed at the time of death.

In the Gita (2.17) we find:

*avinashi tu tad vidhi yena sarvam idam tatam
vinasham avyayasyasya na kashcit kartum
arhasi*

"That which pervades the entire body (consciousness) you should know to be indestructible. No one is able to destroy that (only the body can be destroyed)."

Because this consciousness pervades the subtle mechanism, viz., the mind, one is able to perceive the world through the senses.

In the Gita (2.14) this is explained as follows:

*matra-sparshas tu kaunteya sitoshna-sukha-
dukha-dah*

"O son of Kunti, by touch of the sense objects (by the mind) one experiences heat, cold, happiness and miseries...."

Even without the functioning of the senses, this mind is always connected with the sense objects. That the self has consciousness even when the senses do not operate is well illustrated by our dream knowledge when the senses are not operating. (Charaka Samhita 4.3.31)

Chapter – 7

The Soul is without change

The organs and the limbs potentially existed in the joint causes that operated to bring the fetus into form. Of all these causes the self remains unchanged even when the bodily perceptions undergo different changes, viz., heat, cold, happiness and misery;

*nir vakarah paras tvatma bhutanam nirvisesa
sattva sarirayos tu visesad visesopalabdhih*

- Charaka Samhita 4.4.34

Thus the vikaras or changes of experiencing pleasure and pain, or other such perceptions, are actually due to the contact of mind with the sense objects, and they do not affect the soul proper.

Not only the changes of perceptions, but even the externally visible changes of growth and material transformation of the age and size of the body, does not affect the spirit soul. It remains unchanged, through all the changes of the body.

This Ayurvedic statement is supported by the Upanishads and the Gita (2.13):

*dehino 'smin yatha dehe kaumaram yauvanam
jara*

tatha dehantara-praptir dhiras tatra na muhyati

"As the embodied soul continuously passes without changing, in spite of the bodily changes, from boyhood to youth and onwards to old age, it similarly passes into another body after death of the present body. A sober person is not bewildered by such a bodily change."

Chapter – 8

The Three Dhatus and the Three Gunas

There are three dhatus which are the basic constituents of the body, and two modes, viz. passion and ignorance, that affect the mind. The imbalance of the three dhatus causes the physical diseases and the imbalance of the two modes causes the psychological problems. The treatment of diseases through Ayurveda is founded on the knowledge that by proper prescription of medicine and diet, a healthy person can maintain the equilibrium of the dhatus and a sick person can regain it. Charaka says:

*dhatu samya kriya cokta tantrasyasya
prayojanam*

- Charaka Samhita 1.1.52

In the Vedanta the "guna samya", equilibrium of the three modes of nature, viz. sattva, rajas and tamas, which can be effected only by transcending them, is the prescription to become free from the disease of material existence, of

repeated birth and death. In the Gita (14.20) it is said:

*gunan etan atitya trin dehi-deha samudbhavan
janma-mrityu-jara-dukhair vimukte 'mritam
ashnute*

"When the embodied soul is able to transcend these three modes of nature associated with the body of matter, he can become free from birth, death, old age and other miseries associated with these. Thus one can enjoy the nectar (of immortality) even while living in the body."

Again in the second chapter, text forty-five of the Gita we find:

*traigunya-vishaya veda nistraigunyo
bhavarjuna
nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho niryoga-kshema
atmavan*

"The knowledge of the Vedas deal mainly with the three modes of material nature. O Arjuna, become transcendental to these three modes (by the knowledge of these Vedas). Become free from all dualities and from all anxieties for gain and safety, and be established in your 'self'."

Chapter – 9

Imbalance in the Dhatus

The cause of both the two categories of diseases, viz., physical and psychological, according to Ayurveda is the imbalance in the usage of the three dhatus; either excessive, deficient or misuse:

*kala buddhi indriyarthanam yogo mithya na cati ca
dvyasrayanam vyadhinam trividha hetu samgrahah*

- Charaka Samhita 1.1.53

Vedanta confirms that by the improper use of the three modes of nature, viz., goodness, passion and ignorance, one aggravates the sickness of "samsara", the cycle of repeated birth and death; and in good balance of the gunas one becomes unaffected. In the Gita (14.23) this is stated as follows:

*udasina-vad asino gunair yo na vicalyate
guna vartanta ity evam yo 'vatishthati nengate*

"One remains unwavering and undisturbed through the reactions of the modes of material qualities by remaining neutral and transcendental, knowing that the gunas alone are active."

It is interesting to meditate on the following analysis at this point of our comparison of Ayurveda and Vedanta:

- 1) From the gunas manifest the five material elements, viz., earth, water, fire, air and ether.
- 2) The five elements constitute the physical body.
- 3) From the same gunas manifest the identity, intelligence and mind, which constitute the subtle body.
- 4) Three dhatus are direct manifestations of the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas) and they work by the function of two gunas (passion and ignorance).

5) The imbalance of the dhatus causes the diseases. Either excessive, deficient or misuse of the potency of the body causes this imbalance. The purpose of Ayurveda is to prescribe medicine and diet to balance the dhatus.

6) The imbalance of the gunas causes the repetition of material existence and the miseries therein. The transcending of the gunas is the solution. Thus one becomes free from the miseries, even while living in the body.

Chapter – 10

The Quality of the Body

The quality of the body is of two kinds:

Mala - that which contaminates the system, and

Prasada - that which sustains and purifies.

(Charaka Samhita 4.6.17)

The mala or contamination from which the soul should become free is explained as follows in the Mundaka Upanishad (3.1.9):

esho anur atma cetasa veditavya yasmin pranah
pancadha samvivesha pranais cittamsattvam
otam prajanam yasmin vishuddhe vibhavatyasha
atma

"The atomic soul can be perceived by perfect intelligence as floating in the five kinds of life airs (prana, apana, vyana, samana and udana).

When the consciousness (that pervades from the soul through the entire body) is purified from the contamination of the five kinds of material airs, its spiritual influence is exhibited."

The prasada, or purifying quality, is confirmed in the Gita (2.64-65) thusly:

*raga-dvesha-vimuktais tu vishayan indriyaish caran
atma-vashyair vidheyatma prasadam adhigaccati*

"One who is free from all attachment and aversion and is able to control his senses through regulative principles of freedom factually attains 'prasada'."

*prasade sarva-dukhanam hanir asyopajayate
prasanna-cetaso hy ashu buddhir
paryavatishthate*

"In the prasada platform of existence, all miseries become non-existent. In such satisfied consciousness one's intelligence is soon well established."

Chapter – 11

The Vedanta

Just like many undesirable bodily growths form in the pores of the body, unconstitutionnal desires grow in the aggregate consciousness forming the malas of desire and hatred ("iccha dvesha sukham dukham sanghatash cetana dhriti" - Gita 13.6).

Sometimes the blood and other liquids, which are ingredients for the sustenance and growth of the body, turn into puss. Similarly, the real energy of consciousness, which is love for God, turns into lust for sense enjoyment, and the proxy consciousness in the subtle body, viz., external identity, intelligence and mind, become materially motivated.

Due to excessive, deficient and misuse, the mucus, bile and air become either more or less than the required measure. Similarly, the three gunas which influence the consciousness try to supersede each other and thus pull the

consciousness to bodies situated in different positions in the world.

Dalhana identifies the connection between the gunas and the dhatus as follows:

Vata - Rajas

Pitta - Sattva

Kapha - Tamas

In contrast to this, other Ayurveda Acharyas, such as Susruta, have explained the connection between the dhatus and gunas differently.

Susruta states that in a functioning capacity as a cause for the designing of the body, Kapha acts in the upper portion, i.e., as sattva. This seemingly contradiction will be dealt with in our ensuing article, "Doshas, Dhatus and Gunas".

Susruta says the dhatus are "deha sambhava hetava", causes for the formation of the body.

While acting in this function, the dhatus are connected to the gunas and bodily system as follows:

Vata - lower portion of the body - tamas

Pitta - middle portion of the body - rajas

Kapha - upper-portion of the body like
pillars - sattva

Now let us look at what the Vedanta has to say
about positions or formation of bodies
according to the gunas. The Gita (14.18) states:

*urdhvam gacchanty sattva-stha madhye tishthanti
rajasah
jaghanya-guna-vritti-stha adho gacchanty tamasah*

"Those situated in the mode of goodness
gradually go upward to the higher planets.
Those in the mode of passion live on the earthly
planets. And those in the mode of ignorance go
down to lower species."

Thus the position that a spirit soul takes in this
world determines his lifestyle for the
maintenance of his existence through the
impetus of the influencing modes of nature
("sthanam poshanam utayah" - Srimad
Bhagavatam).

The spirit soul is part and parcel of the divine;
His struggle in the world is due to subtle and

gross identity. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita (15.7):

*mamaivamsho jiva-loke jiva-bhuta sanatanah
manah-shashthanindriyani prakriti-sthani
karshati*

"The spirit souls in this world are My eternal fragmental parts. Due to the conditioned life, they

are struggling very hard with the six senses, which include the mind."

In an imbalanced state of the dhatus, the resistance goes down and other entities subsisting in the body tend to weaken and destroy the body. Similarly, the ulterior and external motives which are material and unconstitutional (to the soul), viz., the fruitive, speculative and exploitative motives, weaken the consciousness and destroy the mission and real goal of life.

The essential part of digested food is 'rasa' (chyle) and the contaminations which are left are the malas.

Similarly, if the sense perceptions and the ensuing attachments that are aroused by the modes remind the soul of its divine and original constitution (viz., sat - "eternal", chit - "awareness", ananda - "bliss"), that is the real 'rasa'. ("raso vai sah")

Malas which create problems for the healthy functioning of the body are unconstitutional to the body.

The contaminations of the consciousness are unconstitutional to the soul. They are material, viz., temporary, full of ignorance and miserable, and thus just opposite to the original constitution of the soul. For this reason they are termed as malas, or "pollutions".

Only for the purpose of experiencing the reactions of the previously fructified actions from past lives and thus finishing off the prarabdha karmas does one need to identify with the body. While perceiving this world with the

senses and functioning with the material body, one has to balance between this rasa and the malas. That balanced life is known as sadhana:

*sukha-duhkhe same kritva
labhalabhau jayajayau
tato yuddhaya yujyasva
naivam papam avapsyasi*

"Do thou fight for the sake of fighting, without considering happiness or distress, loss or gain, victory or defeat - and by so doing you shall never incur sin."

*yuktahara-viharasya
yukta-ceshtasya karmasu
yukta-svapnavabodhasya
yogo bhavati duhkha-ha*

"He who is regulated in his habits of eating, sleeping, recreation and work can mitigate all material pains by practicing the yoga system." Charaka says (4.28.3):

*evam rasa malau sva pramanavasthitav
ashrayasya
sama dhator dhatu samyam auvartayatah*

Thus if rasa and mala are balanced and are kept in their required quantity they cooperate to sustain the body to 'live'.

Chapter – 12

The Conclusion of Ayurveda

(Ayurveda-Vedanta)

Vagbhatta says that as the manifold universe is nothing but the manifestations of the gunas, so all the diseases are but modifications of the three doshas.

As the three gunas work together manifesting the diversity in the world, the three doshas manifest the diversity of diseases.

*arambhakam virodhe 'pi mitho yadyad guna
trayam
vishvasya drishtam yugapad vyadher
doshatrayam तथा*

- Ashtanga-samgraha 1.21

*dhanvantarish ca bhagavan svayam eva kirtir
namna nrinam pururujam ruja ashu hanti
yajne ca bhagam amritayur avavarundha
ayushya vedam anushasty avatirya loke*

"The Lord in His incarnation of Dhanvantari very quickly cures the diseases of the ever diseased living entities simply by His fame personified, and only because of Him do the demigods achieve long lives. Thus the Personality of Godhead becomes ever glorified. He also exacted a share from the sacrifices, and it is He only who inaugurated the medical science or the knowledge of medicine in the universe." - Bhagavata Purana 2.7.22

As stated in the beginning of the Bhagavata Purana, everything emanates from the ultimate source, the Personality of Godhead - "janmady asya yathah". It is therefore understood in this verse that medical science or knowledge of medicine was also inaugurated by the Personality of Godhead.

The body is a symbol of disease. The disease may differ from one variety to another, but disease must be there, just as there is birth and death for everyone. So by the grace of the Personality of Godhead, disease of body and

mind are cured. Not only are diseases of the body and mind are cured, but also the soul is relieved of the constant repetition of birth and death - our ultimate disease. The name of the Lord as the source of curing the disease of material existence is "bhavausadhi", or the source of curing the disease of samsara.

*sharire jarjaribhute vyadhi-graste tathapare
aushadham jahnavi toyam vaidyo narayano
harih*

"When the body has lived its duration of time and has been caught up in the diseases therein, the medicine is Ganga water and the doctor is Narayana who takes away everything."

According to the Vedanta philosophy, our very existence within matter is a disease. Within that diseased condition, due to the influence of avidya (ignorance), we identify some as being healthy and some as being sick.

The purpose of Ayurveda is to enlighten us with the "knowledge (veda) of life (ayuh)".

This knowledge of life is not just knowledge of our existence within dead matter, for that is not actually "life". Knowledge of life is knowledge of the pure spirit soul, situated beyond the limitations of the three gunas. We are all in reality "chaitanya", or the divine 'life force' within the body. The purpose of Ayurveda is to bring us to that complete understanding of our selves as pure life energy.

To bring about this great realization of identity, the Ayurveda science prescribes a lifestyle by which the tenets of the truths of "chaitanya" can be understood in the simplest manner.

The body is itself a temple of diseases (shariram vyadhi mandiram), thus it is impossible to cross beyond these limitations while living in the body if one is identifying with the body; for that misidentification is the actual root of all disease. By raising the consciousness beyond the limiting influences of passion and ignorance (the gross influencing modes of matter), one can re-identify with the soul through factual realization of the "self beyond the body".

Thus one can face the challenge of matter and become totally free from the sufferings caused by the imbalance of 'dhatus' and the resultant 'doshas'.

Lord Krishna describes this in the Gita as follows:

*janma-mrityu-jara-vyadhi
duhkha-doshanudarshanam
etaj jnanam iti proktam
ajnanam yad ato 'nyatha*

"One must see that birth, death, old age and disease are caused by the imbalanced doshas. To see this is called knowledge. Any other vision is ignorance."

From the perception of the body the doshas are the imbalance of the three constituents of the body, (viz., kapha, pitta and vayu) which lead one to experience disease, old age, death, and rebirth.

But from the perception of the soul, the three imbalanced doshas are the modes of nature, viz.,

sattva, rajas and tamas, which are the productive cause of the cycle of samsara, repeated birth and death.

Understanding that the root cause of diseases is the imbalance of doshas is 'knowledge of life', "Ayur-Veda"; and to understand how the pure life force, the "chaitanya", has been conditioned by the doshas of the three modes of nature, is called "Vedanta", or "the conclusion of knowledge (of life force)".

The purpose of this treatise is to harmonize by linking the "knowledge of life" with the "conclusion of knowledge of life force" - thus we have the "Ayurveda-Vedanta".

In the contemporary times, it is Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who has elaborately presented this vision, or "darshanam", of "Ayurveda-Vedanta". He is the great Kaviraja (physician) of modern times, presenting the perfect medicinal arishtam to balance the three doshas of sattva, rajas and tamas.

He has instructed that by taking the ten medicinal "roots", the "dasha mula" of Srimalad

Bhagavatam (the ten subject matters discussed in that classic), we can balance the three doshas of sattva, rajas and tamas, and cure the disease of conditioned material life.

Explaining this truth, Lord Chaitanya has given His prescription, in His composition known as Sikshashtakam, which is a poetically beautiful and philosophically meaningful summary of Ayurveda-Vedanta:

*ceto-darpana-maarjanam bhava-mahaa-
daavagni-nirvaapanam
sreyah-kairava-candrikaa-vitaranam vidyaa-
vadhu-jeevanam
aanandaambudhi-vardhanam prati-padam
purna amrta asvadanam
sarvaatma-snapanam param vijayate sri-krsna-
sankirtanam*

"The dasha-mula of Srimad Bhagavata Purana cleanses the heart of all accumulated pollution and permanently extinguishes the great forest fire of repeated birth and death. These ten

medicinal roots are like an effulgent lotus of good fortune that has been fed with the moonbeams of life. It is the eternal companion of vidya-jeevanam ('the knowledge of life', or Ayurveda). By taking this arishtam of Srimad Bhagavatam the ocean of bliss increases at every step, allowing one to relish the deathless life (amrita) of one's constitutional position. Let all souls bathe in the panacea of this immortal nectar!"

Questions and Answers

Question One: What is the position of the Sun god, who is often addressed as Surya Narayana? There is a particular category of deva known as the 'adityas', of which there are twelve. One of these adityas becomes the sun god for a particular period of time, and then another one will take the post after him. It is just like the position of Yama. At a particular time one person will be acting as Yamaraja, and then another person will take over that function. They are all jivas; they are not vishnu-tattva; they are not Lord Narayana, but when an aditya becomes the sun god he is empowered by Lord Narayana. This is why he is known as Surya Narayana. It is similar to the case of Vyasa Muni, who is an empowered jiva. The difference between the Vyasa category of empowerment and the Surya category of empowerment is that Vyasa does not perform administration, whereas the sun god is the

administrator of the universe. By the diffusion of Surya's energies of heat and light he manages the entire universe. Everything that functions and moves within the universe is empowered by his heat and light.

Surya is a very unique living entity in that the Paramatma (Supersoul) present in his heart is a different form of the Lord than the general paramatma present in the hearts of all living entities. His Paramatma is described as possessing a golden mustache, with two-hands and effulgent.

Surya is also the original teacher of the Vedas. Thus he has two functions, one in administration and one in education. He is already situated beyond liberation, and that's why he does not have a four-handed Paramatma within his heart. The four-handed Paramatma leaves the living entity when the jiva is situated constitutionally. That is the point of liberation: *muktir hitvanyatha rupam sva-rupena vyavasthitih*.

Question Two: How can there only be one sun in the universe?

Every object in creation has light in it due to the presence of the fire element of the panchabhutas. If there is fire there is also light. Thus every object emits light to some degree. An object that does not emit light cannot be seen. The moon and other heavenly bodies also emit light by borrowing from the sun. All the planets and stars are effulgent, but they aren't as effulgent as the sun, and their rays of light are not administrative rays, they are only influencing rays. The Vedic conception does not accept many suns within one universe. There are innumerable universes, each universe possessing fourteen planetary systems which are illuminated by one sun.

There are other fiery heavenly bodies, just as the sun is primarily a fiery planet. Some move in circular orbits and others move back and forth like the Dhumaketu. Though there are many

fiery planets, their fire does not function as the stimulator of every other object within the universe. It is something like the traffic department's police vehicle and the vehicles of others driving in the street. The police drive on the roads to make sure that the traffic is all right, the roads are safe, etc. The other cars are only traveling for their own function; they are not doing anything for the road. Like this, the sun's functioning is administrating the universe. The sun's fire provides the energy for every object to move and expand. In addition to this the sun's control goes all the way down to the working of the elements, their movements and interaction. This is why there is a conception of the sun being the controller of everything, God. Other fiery planets have fire and are hot, but they are not controlling the elements nor administrating the universal diffusion of energy for action. Thus they are not considered as 'suns'. The Bhagavatam states:

*yan-madhya-gato bhagavams
 tapatam patis tapana
 atapena tri-lokim pratapaty
 avabhashayaty atma-bhasha*

"In the midst of that region of outer space is the most opulent sun, the king of all the heavenly bodies that emanate heat. By the influence of its radiation, the sun heats the universe, maintains its proper order and gives light to help all living entities see."

The words tapatam patih indicate that the sun is the supreme among those heavenly bodies that produce heat. Thus it is accepted in the Vedic texts that there are other fiery planets, but they cannot compare to the Sun for the above mentioned reasons.

Question Three: What is the Aditya Hridayam? The Aditya Hridayam is a prayer to the sun god for getting victory in the war. It is usually also chanted for getting rid of sickness and becoming free from loans.

Question Four: What is the Surya Purana?

The Surya Purana is a late compilation taking verses from other more ancient Puranas. Any text that speaks about the sun in the Puranas has been taken and joined to make this Surya Purana. In India this text is usually prominent where ever there is a sun temple. For example there is a Suryanar Koil in Tamil Nadu, and in Orissa there is the Konarak temple. In such places the Surya Purana is prominent. The most authorized texts concerning the sun are the Tejo-bindu Upanishad and the Surya Upanishad.

Why does Krishna say, "Among stars I am the moon"? The moon is certainly not a star.

Krishna states, "nakshatranam aham sashi". A common translation for nakshatra is "star", which is fine in a general sense. But we should not take the technical scientific definition of "star" and think that nakshatra refers to it. In the Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary, "star" is defined as:

"Any of the small points of light, including planets and meteors that are seen in the sky at night."

This is the meaning that we should keep in mind when Lord Krishna says, "Among stars I am the moon." In the night sky, nothing is brighter and more effulgent than the moon. Thus that aspect of supremacy represents Lord Krishna.

Question Five: In chapter fifteen of the Gita Sri Krishna says "I am the moon which nourishes all the vegetables". This seems to be opposite to scientific evidence.

The light of the moon does have impact on vegetation, but this is not a science that has been researched sufficiently by western scientists. In Ayurveda certain plants must be grown and picked by moon light for them to be effective in curing disease. This can be tested scientifically. The modern Ayurvedic producers do not follow this method, and as a result their medicines are hardly 100th as effective as the medicines produced by the traditional method. The traditional method also requires certain bija-

mantras to be chanted into the medicine for several lakhs of counts, and finally there must be worship of Dhanvantari (the incarnation of Vishnu who established Ayurveda). All of these procedures create a subtle effect on the medicine which can be visibly seen by the effect and even by taste. It is unfortunate that hardly any Ayurvedic doctors follow these scriptural rules when producing medicine, and as a result the Ayurvedic science is almost lost.

